

City, county need to plan for most likely disaster

County Attorney Steve Hirsch asked a pretty good question the other day:

Are we planning for the right emergency? Decatur County and others in the area are busy polishing up bioterrorism and animal health plans for the state. The counties expect a bonanza of federal money by sending in the plans state and federal officials want.

But what is the chance of terrorists planting a biological bomb amidst Kansas wheat or a devastating disease in our livestock?

As New Orleans and Texas have learned, Mother Nature is the one most likely to pack a punch.

In Kansas, we're still a lot more likely to deal with a tornado or a flood than a bioterrorism incident. Man-made chemical spills, explosions, plane crashes, bus wrecks, fires and disasters are a lot more likely than terrorist bombs.

In the end, it won't matter much what kind of disaster we face, though. A disaster disrupts communication, kills and maims, cuts roads and telephone lines, downs towers, threatens homes and families.

And someone has to be ready to face the destruction, make sense out of the situation, restore order and begin the cleanup.

The county and city working together have to be ready for that.

Police and fire departments, the health department and the sheriff will respond.

Who will be in charge? Where will they meet? What will they do? Can they all talk with each other? Will they know how to act as a team?

The shocking answer in Decatur County is that the main emergency planning committee hasn't met in more than a decade. No one is sure who should be on it, or how a disaster would be met.

County commissioners moved quickly to change that. Plans will be updated and roles in a disaster defined.

That's vital. In a disaster, whether a tornado or a plane crash, lines of authority need to be clear. Preparations made in advance will smooth the responses.

There needs to be an emergency command post, for instance. Decatur County used to have one, but the van wore out and was never replaced.

Security needs to be established. The players need to know their roles. Permits need to be issued to those permitted in the area, such as emergency workers, utility crews and reporters, and others need to be kept at bay.

Law enforcement needs to maintain order and prevent looting, and yes, that could happen here, even if on a small scale.

And through all of this, we'll have to rely on our own resources, because help will be hours away at best. Reinforcements from the state or the National Guard, if things get that bad, could take a day or two to arrive.

By that time, local officials should have things well in hand.

If there is a plan. If everyone knows what to do.

When something does happen — fire, tornado or terrorist plot — things won't go right. They never do in the heat of battle. You just can't anticipate all the problems nature will throw at you.

But they'll go a lot better if there is a plan, if people get training and if there is good cooperation both here and with neighboring towns.

The commissioners did the right thing when they got the ball rolling on this.

— Steve Haynes



There's just no place like home

If I stayed at home, I'd want to travel. Since I'm on the road all the time, I'd like to stay home.

Steve and I figured that we were going to be in five beds in six days.

Last Wednesday, we headed for Concordia to see my mother and go to a funeral, then on to Lawrence to see our son.

We spent the night at the Springhill Suites in Lawrence and took our daily walk along the levy of the Kansas River. The levy in Lawrence looks good and the river runs placidly until it hits a dam right above our hotel. The spill over the dam is quite a show.

On Thursday, we headed toward Kansas City to get some barbecue for lunch. Ribs and barbecue beef are some of the things we miss from our former lives as city dwellers on the Kansas-Missouri line.

From Kansas City, we headed west and south to the Lake of the Ozarks, our final destination. We were there to represent the National Newspaper Association at the annual Missouri Press Association meeting.

We spent the next three days and two nights at the Four Seasons Resort on the lake. I'm not complaining, mind you, but the Lake of the Ozarks is a much cooler place for a convention than the Holiday Inn in Topeka or Manhattan, which is where the Kansas Press holds its



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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conventions.

On Saturday, we said good-bye to our friends in Missouri and headed back towards Kansas City for another round of barbecue.

After a late lunch, we made the run across Kansas. We finally got home about 10:30 Saturday night and it was good to sleep in our own bed after three days of travel.

Sunday morning after church, we made lunch, but when we started to clean up, the garbage disposal choked and started spitting stuff back into the sink. Steve accused me of putting too much vegetable matter down the drain, and since that was true, I told him it was his fault.

However, when I went downstairs to run a load of clothes, I found that the sewer was backing up. We didn't have a big problem, yet, just a pool of dirty water around the drain. However, it wasn't going down, and any additional water down any pipe in the house would cause the water around the floor to

rise.

We figured we couldn't do any more dishes or clothes, flush the toilet or take a shower. Since it was Sunday and we couldn't find a plumber who would answer his phone, we decided to spend the night at the LandMark Inn. We needed showers after working around the house all afternoon.

Monday, the plumber came and we were back into our home and bed, if only for a night.

Tuesday we were slated to leave for Milwaukee for the annual National Newspaper Association convention.

That's one night in Lawrence, two at the Lake of the Ozarks, two non-consecutive nights at home, one at the LandMark and several in Milwaukee.

I love to travel and I really enjoy going places and meeting people, but I'm going to be ready to be home for awhile, let me tell you.

With running water, of course.

Jim gets space, so does her car

This is my absolute favorite time of year. Crisp, clear mornings. Slightly cool, yet warm-in-the-sun days. And nights just chilly enough to need a blanket.

If there were someplace on earth where it is like this all year 'round, I would move there. But since there isn't, I'll just stay in Kansas and enjoy it while it lasts.

—ob—

Jim is a hard-working man. Almost always, he has another job lined up before he finishes his last one. Therefore, he's usually on a dead run.

He'll dump his concrete tools off in the garage, load up carpentry tools and take off. Next time, he'll dump the carpentry tools and start working on a windmill.

Consequently, over the years, things got a little disorganized. When I suggested Jennifer and I could help him get organized, it struck fear in his heart because he translated "organized" into us throwing his stuff away.

We assured him we would not discard anything without his approval. "Fair enough," he said, and the deal was struck.

For more than a month, we had been planning a "clean sweep" day. Saturday would be THE day. Maybe I should have called it GTGCO Day



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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— that's Get The Garage Cleaned Out Day.

I knew Jim was going to be sensitive about his "stuff," so to lighten the mood, I made signs for the backyard. The morning of GTGCO Day, I sneaked out before the sun came up and nailed them to trees, hung them from the gazebo and propped them up in rose bushes.

Unlike the signs on the television show that only distinguish between "Keep," "Sell" and "Trash," these were signs that designated the different categories into which we would sort things. I had "Electrical," "Automotive," "Tools," "Plumbing," "Wood," "Misc." and, of course, the dreaded "TRASH." He thought it was funny, but it really did help us keep things sorted.

Now, Jim kind of drags his feet on a project like this, but once started, he's like a machine. He won't quit. I was proud of him. He threw away

lots more than I thought he would or could. He's building shelving units and a big, solid work bench with a metal top, just like he always wanted, and lots of storage space. I know he appreciated our help, and I know he'll be even more productive in his new space.

I have an admission to make, though. I had an ulterior motive in all this.

Now, I can park my car inside.

From the Bible

But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God.

Romans 2: 10, 11

Congress needs to tighten belt

Our nation finds itself at a crossroads following the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina.

Thousands of lives have been affected, and thousands more have sacrificed and opened their hearts to relieve the suffering of victims.

While Americans have given much, Congress has been slow to learn that being good stewards of the taxpayer dollar also requires a little sacrifice. Congress has provided a much needed \$65 billion in disaster relief — a record level in our nation's history — but has yet to tighten its belt to reduce spending in noncritical areas in order to pay for this aid.

Instead, Congress appears poised to pass on the burden of record deficits to future generations. As more aid is needed in the coming weeks and months, we must ensure this natural disaster does not become a financial disaster for our country.

The magnitude of rebuilding the Gulf Coast region requires Congress to make sacrifices, even if they fall close to home.

I am calling on my colleagues to adopt a one-year moratorium on all 2006 legislative earmarks. Last year, members secured nearly 14,000 special projects, totaling \$27 billion.

Delaying these projects for a year



On the Potomac

By U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran
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is a reasonable sacrifice members of Congress can make. I also have sponsored legislation to postpone for two years the Medicare prescription drug benefit, except for seniors with the highest financial need.

This delay of full implementation will save taxpayers billions of dollars. In this time of overstretched budgets, our country cannot afford this expensive program.

Now more than ever, it is time for Congress to get serious about exercising fiscal responsibility. As critical resources are provided for recovering and rebuilding the Gulf Coast communities, it is important proper controls are put in place to ensure taxpayer money is spent wisely and reaches those who need it.

There is also much room to reform the federal budget process in ways that eliminate wasteful, unnecessary and inappropriate spending. I am pleased to support legislation led by Kansas delegation mem-

bers Sen. Sam Brownback and Rep. Todd Tiahrt that establishes a commission to independently review federal programs in order to eliminate those which are outdated, irrelevant or inefficient.

I am also supporting a Constitutional amendment to require the federal government to balance its budget. Almost every state, including Kansas, is required to balance its books by year's end, just as you and I do with our budgets at home.

The time for fiscal discipline and accountability is long overdue in our nation's capital. As we reach this crossroads, the decisions of Congress will affect generations to come. I have no doubt that Americans will come together and recover from the devastation left by Hurricane Katrina.

Members of Congress must now step up and work together to ensure the financial future of America does not become another victim.

Gun photo bad example for youth

To the Editor:

I read with interest the Kimberly Davis article in the Sept. 14 issue of *The Oberlin Herald*. Kudos to Jeremy Tally for his accomplishment.

While I was entertained by his interesting and well-written story, I was disturbed by the photo accompanying the article. Quoting from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries "Hunter Education Student Manual," "whenever

Letter to the Editor

you handle a firearm, always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction."

I vividly recall learning the same thing in the gun safety course I had with Neal Russell in Oberlin many years ago. Even if the photographer

wasn't directly behind the camera and thereby looking straight down the barrel of that rifle, the perception is there, setting a life-threatening example for children.

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